DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 392 010 CG 026 853

TITLE The Future of America's Schools. Psychology's Role in Education.

INSTITUTION American Psychological Association, Washington, D.C.

PUB DATE 94

NOTE 5p.

PUB TYPE Reports - Evaluative/Feasibility (142)

EDRS PRICE MF01 Plus Postage. PC Not Available from EDRS.

DESCRIPTORS Academic Achievement; Childhood Needs; Children; Cooperative Programs; Elementary Secondary Education; High Risk Students; *Integrated Services; *Psychological Services; Psychological Studies; *Psychologists; *Psychology; School Counseling; *School Effectiveness; School Psychologists; Shared Resources and Services; Well Being

ABSTRACT

An environment in which children feel secure and achieve a sense of emotional well-being is an environment in which children can learn. Today, psychology's greatest contributions to education are those that promote student welfare and enhance educational effectiveness and student achievement. Schools mirror society; both are struggling with issues that threaten not only teaching and learning but the very process of human growth. The challenges to childhood are complex and often frightening. To fulfill their mission, modern educators need the body of knowledge and the understanding of human behavior that is psychology. Psychologists bring to the schoolhouse of the 1990s a perspective that is both biological and behavioral in its approach. Psychology has always been fundamental to education. As a research discipline, it provides the current basis for understanding the learning process. However, one-time, single solution approaches will not succeed. Comprehensive, interdisciplinary services for children and families are required. Comprehensive programs which support the following topics are briefly described: expanding health and social services; preventing violence; and dealing with diversity in the classroom. National educational goals signal widespread recognition of the challenges facing our education system and are, in turn, a virtual blueprint for the contributions psychology can make toward improving the education environment and student achievement. (JBJ)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED 392 010

PSYCHOLOGICAL SERVICES FOR THE 21ST CENTURY

Psychology's Role in

EDUCATION

Building Strong Schools

Promoting Learning

Teaching Social Competence

Producing Functioning Citizens

The Future of America's Schools

AN ENVIRONMENT in which children feel secure and achieve a sense of emotional well-being is an environment in which children can learn. Today, psychology's greatest contributions to education are those that promote student welfare and enhance educational effectiveness and student achievement.

Schools mirror society. Both are struggling with issues that threaten not only teaching and learning but the very process of human growth. The range of problems is truly daunting, from preparing young people for a highly competitive, international economy; to creating a classroom environment suitable for young people from a vast mix of cultural and racial backgrounds; to teaching them to deal with the violence that has become commonplace on our streets.

Schools today play a primary nurturing and socializing role in an increasingly complex world. They often comprise the single social system or institution that reaches virtually all children and families with children. Because they work on the front lines, schools will play key roles in the two great reform movements now before our legislatures: education and health care. Passage of the national education goals signals a recognition of the challenges facing our education system.

The challenges to childhood are complex and often frightening. To fulfill their mission, modern educators need the body of

PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL IN **OTHER THAN PAPER COPY** HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

K. Thomas

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

AMERICAN PSYCHOLOGICAL ASSOCIATION

WASHINGTON, DC

© 1994. All rights reserved.

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

☐ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

CG026853

knowledge and the understanding of human behavior that is psychology. They need holistic solutions that build on the resources and expertise of many disciplines. No single profession can solve the education crisis. The risks to children, and to classroom learning, are too great to do otherwise.

A Look at the Big Picture

Psychologists bring to the schoolhouse of the 1990s a perspective that is both biological and behavioral in its approach. Theirs is both a scientifically grounded academic profession and a service-oriented health profession. Any candidate for a doctoral degree in psychology must complete an education and training program that is more intensive and multidimensional than that demanded by any other discipline. This background includes an understanding of cognitive, emotional, behavioral and organizational processes and the diagnosis, prevention, and treatment of cognitive and emotional disorders.

Because of its status as a science, psychology also provides extensive training in research and evaluation skills—expertise that psychologists working in schools put to use for assessing programs and procedures and creating interventions designed to overcome obstacles to learning.

The Elements of Success

Psychology has always been fundamental to education. As a research discipline, it provides the current basis for understanding the learning process, and its principles underlie much of 20th century education theory and practice. As the 21st century approaches and American education faces new challenges to teaching Johnny and Ming and Mary and Carmencita to read, psychology has considerable knowledge and experience to contribute.

What Psychologists Do in Schools

Promote health

Prevent illness

Provide crisis intervention

Foster staff development

Train staff in effective teaching

Train staff in class management (discipline)

Help children achieve developmental milestones

Test and assess students

Design and evaluate programs

Counsel students, families, and staff

Issues Psychologists Deal With in Schools

Discipline problems

Substance abuse

Family dysfunction

Violence

Suicide

Depression

Antisocial behavior

Sexual activity, pregnancy, AIDS, and STDs

Model School-Linked Programs That Work

One-time, single solution approaches will not succeed. Comprehensive, interdisciplinary services for children and families are required. Psychologists can make such integration of services work because of their skills in whole-child development, intervention design and evaluation, and group dynamics. Additionally, services that children and their families need, such as health promotion services, counseling, and parent training, must be brought into schools or linked with the schools. Psychologists can support this task, too.

Expanding Health and Social Services

Memphis, Tennessee, has integrated a broad range of educational, mental health, and social services in a school-based health center. Here psychologists, social workers, and substance abuse counselors conduct a multidisciplinary effort serving children and their families. The program, designed by Dr. Jim Paavola, a school psychologist, includes organized efforts to prevent teenage pregnancy, substance abuse, and child abuse.

The Annie E. Casey Foundation is supporting a program targeting high-risk youth in three large urban areas: Bridgeport, Connecticut; Little Rock, Arkansas; and Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. This program, which features a case management approach, includes the development of multidisciplinary screening and support teams for dealing with issues such as family dysfunction that threaten the achievements of young people. The goals are to improve school attendance and graduation rates, increase youth employment after high school, and reduce adolescent pregnancy.

Preventing Violence

Wright State University psychologist W. Rodney Hammond, Ph.D., has created PACT—Positive Adolescents Choices Training—a training program aiming to reduce the risk of African-American youth becoming victims or perpetrators of violence. PACT, which is functioning in school-linked programs in the Dayton, Ohio, area, uses a group-training approach to provide young people with the social skills and techniques for managing anger in conflict situations. Since 1989, when the program was begun, PACT trainees have been involved in about half as many criminal acts as a comparable group of adolescents who did not participate in the program.

The University of Houston Psychological Research and Services Center is conducting the Juvenile Victim Project in the Houston Independent School District. At the center, staff work with school-age children and adolescents who are victims of crime or at risk of being victimized. The young people are referred by law enforcement and social service agencies.

A child who has been victimized is seen immediately by a crisis-intervention counselor who helps the child resolve the immediate emotional crisis and reduce the long-term effect of the situation. Potential victims—typically young people living in communities with escalating violence—benefit from an intervention program where they learn to spot the cues of impending danger in group situations and to set limits with their peers.

Dealing With Diversity in the Classroom

The University of Rochester Primary Mental Health Project helps detect school adjustment problems in young children. It also extends the reach of the school psychologist when budgets are tight. To this end, the project trains teachers to use brief, objective screening measurements for constructing a systematic profile of a child's strengths and weaknesses. The child identified as needing extra attention is assigned to a child associate, who works with each child individually under the direction of the school psychologist.

By training and supervising the child associates and consulting with them, the school psychologist can reach many more people who need help than by simply working personally with children and their families. And because of the emphasis on early detection, problems can be identified and dealt with before the children fall too far behind others in their age group.

Brooklyn College and the New York City Board of Education have established a program to prepare bilingual clinical psychologists for work in multilingual and multicultural settings. As specialists in linguistic and cultural diversity in the schools, the psychologists provide developmental support services for young people and conduct nondiscriminatory assessment of young people referred for evaluation.

A Revitalized Approach to Education

The adoption by Congress of a set of national education goals signals widespread recognition of the challenges facing our education system. The goals, in turn, are a virtual blueprint for the contributions that psychology can make toward improving the education environment and student achievement.

■ *Children begin school ready to learn, and come to school every day ready to learn.*

Psychology's knowledge of the way events in early life affect child development underlies the prevention and intervention programs across the nation that promote the intellectual, emotional, social, and educational growth of infants, toddlers, and children. Perhaps the most famous is Head Start, the highly effective childhood intervention program designed to prepare low-income children for elementary school.

■ *All students complete high school.*

Psychologists have developed successful programs to prevent student alienation and school drop-outs and to increase student motivation and curriculum relevance. Psychological research has also identified factors that lead to school failure, such as family dysfunction or student perception that "learning doesn't matter." All this knowledge will be put to good use in the design of personal and system interventions that keep young people in school.

■ *Student competency and preparation for adulthood.*

One way to keep students on track toward graduation is by measuring their developing abilities. Drawing on their expertise in testing and assessment, psychologists will help set the standards for student achievement and appropriate ways to measure that achievement.

■ *Teachers with quality training and opportunities for continued professional development.*

Psychologists understand how and why people learn; they are also expert in human behavior. They will continue to put this knowledge to work advising teachers on the most effective teaching methods.

■ *Student achievement in math and science.*

As society becomes more technologically sophisticated, math and science ability will be more critical for success. The foundations of psychological research, assessment, and measurement systems will help students expand their mastery of math and science disciplines.

■ *Adult literacy and lifelong learning.*

Psychologists involved in basic language research are piecing together the processes people use to read and understand language. This knowledge will lead to programs designed to improve the comprehension skills of all Americans.

■ *School environments conducive to learning.*

Learning environments must be safe, disciplined, and drug-free. Psychology has a wealth of both research knowledge and practice experience to contribute to this goal. Psychologists have already designed and implemented programs that are having success addressing such issues as violence, drug use, and disruptive behavior in schools. Examples are programs designed to teach conflict resolution to young people.

■ *Parental participation in the school community and the education of their children.*

The programs that psychologists help to create in the schoolhouse will bring parents into the building and, ultimately, involve parents in their children's education. The fruit of psychological research on the learning process will also help parents facilitate their children's learning. Psychological research has shown, for example, that children whose parents read to them during their toddler years grow up to be better readers, and that parental praise is more important than material reward in fostering academic achievement.

For further information:

American Psychological Association
750 First Street, NE
Washington, DC 20002-4242
202/336-5700